



National Institute for  
Occupational Safety and Health  
Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention (CDC)  
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May 22, 2021

James S. Frederick  
Acting Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health  
Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Mr. Frederick:

I am writing in response to your request for an assessment by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, of the current hazards facing healthcare workers from Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), the health condition caused by exposure to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2).

While COVID-19 case rates are declining nationally and the vaccination rate is climbing, transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus continues to be a hazard of concern for healthcare workers. The available evidence shows that healthcare workers are continuing to become infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including both vaccinated and unvaccinated workers, and the conditions for the transmission of the virus exist at healthcare workplaces.<sup>1,2</sup>

Workers in healthcare settings that provide treatment to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 face a particularly elevated risk of being infected with SARS-CoV-2. Regardless of vaccination status, healthcare workers need additional protections such as

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<sup>1</sup> Pilishvili T, Fleming-Dutra KE, Farrar JL, et al. Interim Estimates of Vaccine Effectiveness of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines Among Health Care Personnel — 33 U.S. Sites, January–March 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. ePub: 14 May 2021, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7020e2.htm>

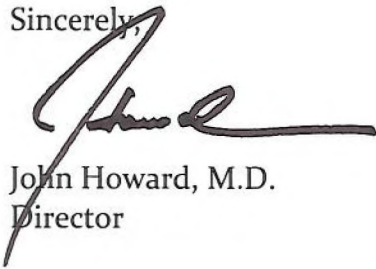
<sup>2</sup> Teran RA, Walblay KA, Shane EL, et al. Postvaccination SARS-CoV-2 Infections Among Skilled Nursing Facility Residents and Staff Members — Chicago, Illinois, December 2020–March 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2021;70:632–638, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7017e1.htm>

respirators and other personal protective equipment (PPE) during direct care of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.<sup>3,4</sup>

The delivery of such care may involve high levels of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 because care delivery generally requires repeated instances of close contact with infected patients. In addition, given their role in providing care to patients with COVID-19, healthcare providers will be of greater risk of exposure to new SARS-CoV-2 variants, which may affect the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines.

If you should have additional questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,



John Howard, M.D.  
Director

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<sup>3</sup> CDC [2021]. Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic, available at [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Finfection-control%2Fcontrol-recommendations.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Finfection-control%2Fcontrol-recommendations.html)

<sup>4</sup> CDC [2021]. Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html>